

# Domesticating Geographical Exploration: Fredrika Bremer's American Travel Narrative

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Europeans have always seen America as the embodiment of the future. In the nineteenth century, as a result of its "democratic experiment," the United States became a the favourite setting for both utopian and dystopian social visions.\* The publication of literally hundreds of American travel books and the enormous popularity of some of them document the centrality of the United States in European imaginations. In book after book the New World was emplotted in the image of European cultural and political preoccupations. Although the single most influential of these books was Alexis de Tocqueville's *De la démocratie en Amérique*, the numerous British travel writers seem to have dominated the field and determined the parameters of the debate.<sup>1</sup> The most important Scandinavian contribution was Fredrika Bremer's *Hemmen i den Nya Världen* (1853-54), which was published in an English translation a few months before the Swedish edition came out and afterwards quickly translated into Dutch, French and German.<sup>2</sup>

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1 According to Max Berger, over two hundred and thirty British travel books about America appeared during the period from 1836 to 1860. The market for such books was so great, he claims, that "practically every manuscript having a trace of merit or interest sooner or later appeared in book form" (*The British Traveller in America, 1836-1860* [New York: Columbia University Press, 1943], p. 190).

2 For a general discussion of the impact of American travel writing in Europe, see Halvdan

For many years Fredrika Bremer's American travel book was considered her most enduring work. In recent years, as part of their effort to incorporate women writers in the literary canon, feminist critics have tended to focus on a recovery of her fiction and regard *Hemmen i den Nya Varlden* primarily as a source of secondary, autobiographical material. Apart from Lars Wendelius's study of the intellectual origins of Bremer's views about America, little attention has been paid to it in terms of nineteenth-century travel writing, and Wendelius too abstracts information from its narrative context.<sup>3</sup> But although *Hemmen i den Nya Varlden* is a collection of informal journal letters written during an actual two-year journey through the United States and Cuba in 1849-51, it is not a transcription of the author's experiences or attitudes. Like other autobiographical travel books it is a literary construct and, consequently, a response to other texts as well as to the facts of the journey.

This article is an attempt to situate *Hemmen i den Nya Varlden* in the context of contemporary travel literature. My discussion will focus on some implications of the semantic contrast in the title between *homes*—referring to private, delimited spaces, the domain of women—and *New World* with its connotations of enormous, unexplored geographical spaces and infinite possibilities. Since the public world was considered men's domain, the two parts of the title neatly conforms to the contemporary notion of "separate spheres," the social codification of biological essentialism that was a commonplace in nineteenth-century thinking about sex and gender. By giving primacy to the woman's sphere of *homes* Bremer's title tells us that she self-consciously bases her authority as an observer and a social critic on the area of expertise culturally allocated to women. At the same time, her project involves the textual appropriation of an entire continent, an expansionist task which belongs to men according to this ideology. As a woman attempting to perform it, she could therefore easily be accused of transgressing her natural sphere and of being "strong-minded" or unwomanly. In *Hemmen i den Nya Varlden* this dilemma is reflected in some unresolved tensions between different social and generic codes.

When Fredrika Bremer went on her American grand tour, she was

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Koht, *Amerika i Europa. Impulser från vaster i teknik, politik, kultur* (Stockholm: Natur och Kultur, 1950).

3 Lars Wendelius, *Fredrika Bremers amerikabild. En studie i Hemmen i den Nya Verlden* (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1985).

approaching fifty and had been an established and popular novelist for many years. Thanks to Mary Howitt's English translations her books were almost as well-known in the United States as in Sweden. Although she travelled alone, she could therefore always rely on a supportive network of admirers and acquaintances who invited her into their homes. Thus she had easy access to first-hand information about her chosen theme. "Jag far från hem och till hem inom Amerika, och ar overallt mottagen och bemott som barn i huset," she writes almost eight months into her journey. "Utom det goda for sjalens och kroppens liv, som detta har med sig, får jag tillfalle att se hemmen och familjelivet i nya varlden, och således lara kanna det innersta av livet i denna varldsdel på ett satt, som knappast någon annan resande har fått det och som är for mig av hogsta värde."<sup>4</sup> Her focus on family life links *Hemmen i den Nya Varlden* thematically to the domestic novels on which her reputation as a writer was based. However, the same narrative strategy can be found in the works of many other nineteenth-century women travel writers, especially in Britain, the country whose values Bremer explicitly posits as the frame of reference for her own interpretation of the United States. In the introductory letter, written on the voyage to New York, she explains why she has chosen to travel there via England:

Jag ville lara kanna modern innan jag gjorde bekanskap med dottern, for att ha jämförelsepunkter och ett rattesnore, varefter jag kunde ratt fatta typen. Jag visste, att Sverige och Stockholm var av annat slakte, an engelska lander och stader.... Men England hade först givit befolkning, lag och lynne åt Norra Amerika. Det var den gamla varlden i England, som måste bli min stödjepunkt for bedomande av den nya. (Vol. IA, p. 17)

Not only is Bremer's interpretation of America mediated through her knowledge of English culture. Her literary models are also primarily British, specifically the works of well-known women travel writers such as Frances Trollope and Harriet Martineau, who had both published important books about American journeys.

Bremer read Harriet Martineau's *Society in America* in 1837, the year it was published, as her correspondence with the theologian Per Johan Böklin shows.<sup>5</sup> Although she makes some references to Frances

4 Fredrika Bremer, *Hemmen i den Nya Varlden* (1853-54; new ed. Solna: K/B Serno Coordinato, 1981-83), Vol. IB, p. 115. All further references are to this edition and will be included in the text,

5 Klara Johanson and Ellen Kleman, eds., *Fredrika Brerners brev. Del 1: 1821-1838*

Trollope's notorious *Domestic Manners of the Americans* (1832) in her own travel narrative, there is no clear evidence that she had actually read this book. But it is probably no coincidence that Bremer's title, which sums up the orientation of her journey, is an echo of Trollope's. She was of course familiar with the works of many other travel writers, continental as well as British. The most notable of these is Tocqueville's *De la démocratie en Amérique*, which she describes in a letter to Boklin as "en bok som gor epok i mitt lif genom de utsigter den opnar, de tankar den låter mig tanka, de resultater den hjälper mig att komma till."<sup>6</sup> What Trollope and Martineau provided, was an explicitly domestic perspective on the exploration of the New World. Since this was seen as a uniquely feminine contribution to the literature about America, Bremer could use it to legitimate her own undertaking.

It should be emphasized, however, that the broad outlines of women's narratives about travel in the New World differ little from those of men's. Like most nineteenth-century travel writers, Trollope, Martineau and Bremer are interested in North-America because it represents the creation of a new social order. As Harriet Martineau puts it: "It is an absorbing thing to watch the process of world-making."<sup>7</sup> Bremer uses the closely corresponding term "varldsbildning" (Vol. IIB, p. 107). The growth of a capitalist economy in the New World is a development they view with approval. In fact, their itineraries retrace the pattern of European expansion by following the movement of the settlers from the most populous eastern and southern states, and going westward as far as the Mississippi and the edge of the prairies. The country beyond is

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(Stockholm: Norstedt, 1915), pp. 476-80. This particular letter gives an interesting insight into Bremer's attitude to the so-called "woman question" in the late 1830s. Commenting on Harriet Martineau's advocacy of political rights for women, she says: "Jag kande lifligt huru litet bide samhället och Qvinnan sjelf skulle vinna genom detta hennes utgående ur den henne af Naturen anvista sfer; ja, huru oandligt mycket de skulle forlora. Det ges ju ntigot högre an lagen, ntigot vigtigare an lagstiftning, det är den sedliga anda som ingjuter i lagen sitt valgjörande lif. Qvinnans deltagande i statslivet p i samma satt som Mannen skulle förstora hennes Qvinnlighet förtage det valgorande af hennes inflytande p i lifvet och sederna, och under striden med Manner skulle Mankonet snart bli for henne hvad den gamle Tanten hos Washington Irving kallade det, neml: 'the opposite sex'" (pp. 477-78). In *Hemmen i den Nya Varlden* this view is modified but not substantially altered.

6 Klara Johanson and Ellen Kleman, eds., *Fredrika Bremers brev*. Del II: 1838-1846 (Stockholm: Norstedt, 1916), p. 371.

7 Harriet Martineau, *Society in America* (London: Saunders and Otley, 1837), Vol. I, p. 120.

described by Bremer as an immense wilderness where the small field of corn, a first hopeful sign of civilization, may be seen as "spåren av den ena foten på Robinsons obebodda ö" (Vol. IIB, p. 115). This is a significant allusion, not only because it defines civilization in terms of human community and the cultivation of land, but because Crusoe is the archetypal empire builder. His goal is to domesticate an alien environment by imposing upon it a European way of life. By writing in terms that sanction this goal, Bremer, like most other nineteenth-century travel writers of either sex, participates in what Gayatri Spivak calls "the imperialist narrativization of history."<sup>8</sup>

It is the persona of the observer and narrator that is constructed differently in women's travel books. The narrators of nineteenth-century travel books by women tend to think and speak, as Bremer puts it, "ur kvinnosfarens centrum" (Vol. IA, p. 198). In Trollope's book this feminine subject position is apologetically represented as a limitation. Being "a feeble looker-on, with a needle for my spear," her narrator is a reliable informant only about the domestic sphere:

I am in no way competent to judge of the political institutions of America; and if I should occasionally make an observation on their effects, as they meet my superficial glance, they will be made in the spirit and with the feeling of a woman, who is apt to tell what her first impression may be, but unapt to reason back from effects to their causes.<sup>9</sup>

Such conventional gestures of feminine modesty have no place in the agendas of Harriet Martineau and Fredrika Bremer. Both consistently assert the advantages, even superiority, of a feminine point of view. In this respect their books may be read as generational reactions against the timidity of the twenty years older Trollope. Defending her position in terms similar to Bremer's, Martineau writes that as a woman she has "seen more of domestic life than could possibly have been exhibited to any gentleman travelling through the country. The nursery, the boudoir, the kitchen, are all excellent schools in which to learn the morals and manners of the people."<sup>10</sup> Both explain their focus on what Bremer calls "the inner life" as a deliberate narrative and methodological strategy.

8 Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "Three Women's Texts and a Critique of Imperialism," *Critical Inquiry*, Vol. 12 (Autumn 1985), p. 244.

9 Frances Trollope, *Domestic Manners of the Americans* (1832; rpt. London: Century Publishing, 1982), p. 145.

10 *Society in America*, Vol. I, xvi.

But whereas Martineau puts her emphasis on how politics, which she describes as "a branch of moral science," is reflected in domestic life, Bremer centres her attention on the homes themselves. In her opinion it is the moral qualities of the homes, and consequently of the women who rule them, that determine the moral quality of the society as a whole and not the reverse: "ty som floden fodes av himmelens kallor, så fodes folkens liv och oden av hemmens forborgade liv" (Vol. IA, p. 66).

Although *Hemmen i den Nya Varlden* includes the obligatory tourist visits to "sacred" sights like the Niagara Falls,<sup>11</sup> as well as the common American travel book repertoire of religious and abolitionist meetings, slave markets and public institutions such as prisons, schools and hospitals, Bremer's interest in these aspects of her journey is perfunctory. With the exception of the issue of slavery, about which she becomes increasingly vehement, she rarely uses her status as a first-hand observer to make socio-political judgments. Unlike Martineau, who has been described as a pioneer sociologist,<sup>12</sup> she claims to dislike generalizations about groups of people: "hopen utplånar individualiteten," as she puts it (Vol. IA, p. 203). Instead, the geography of the New World—the lay of the land as well as its cultural, social and economic aspects—is mediated through a series of particularized exempla. The narrative has the form of loosely connected and more or less fully developed stories of personal encounters with individual Americans, sometimes on the road, but usually in intimate and domestic settings. More like an itinerant ethnographer than a sociologist, Bremer's narrator studies the inhabitants of the New World by becoming a temporary participant in their lives. Her observations of present-day Americans are important because they point out the future direction of human development, "den nya manskligheten och en vision av dess framtid på den nya jorden" (Vol. IIB, p. 107). The role of the traveller is to be an interpreter of the many voices of the country, personified as a prophetess: "min alskade, min stora, skona syster, sibyllan, vid vars kna jag sitter lyssnande" (Vol. IIA, p. 219). The image of the sibyl may be applied to Bremer's text as well.

11 The term is used by John F. Sears in *Sacred Places: American Tourist Attractions in the Nineteenth Century* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989).

12 With particular reference to her book *How to Observe Manners and Morals* (1838), which was drafted on the voyage to America in 1834, R. K. Webb writes that Martineau was for years "preaching sociology without the name" (*Harriet Martineau: A Radical Victorian* [New York: Columbia University Press, 1960], p. 308).

Since the different episodes and the lessons they teach are evaluated separately, the whole is fragmented like the sibyl's prophesy.

*Hemmen i den Nya Världen* belongs to the broad category of nineteenth-century European travel writing that Mary Louise Pratt calls experiential or sentimental and defines in opposition to writing that has a primarily informational purpose.<sup>13</sup> Informational accounts, says Pratt, tend to dwell on panoramic descriptions of landscape and to present the traveller as "a kind of collective moving eye which registers [the] sights."<sup>14</sup> The observations are often made from the point of view of science or economic expansion. When the local population is depicted, it is usually in the form of generalized portraits of customs and manners set apart from the main narrative. Although the informational mode remained dominant throughout the century, its self-effacing, authoritative voice was challenged by the more dramatized experiential mode which places the persona of the narrator in the foreground of the story. When manners-and-customs descriptions appear in this kind of travel writing, they are usually more closely related to narrative episodes. They also exist in conjunction with dramatizations of personal contact between the traveller and the local natives. In fact, the authority of experiential travel accounts is based on such dialogue. Thus, according to Pratt, this mode "must be associated with that critical sector of the bourgeois world, the private sphere, home of the solitary introspective Individual."<sup>15</sup> Contemporary comments show that the distinction Pratt sets up was widely accepted by nineteenth-century travel writers and critics. Harriet Martineau, for example, published one book of each category about her American journey, supplementing *Society in America* with the more personal *Retrospect of Western Travel* in 1838. In her autobiography she notes that the latter was more popular both among those who "read for amusement, and skip the politics" and those who "wisely desire us to see what we can, and tell what we see, without spinning out of ourselves systems and final causes.... Carlyle wrote me that he had rather read of Webster's cavernous eyes and arm under his coat-tail, than all the political speculation that a cut and dried system

13 Mary Louise Pratt, "Scratches on the face of the Country; or, What Mr. Barrow Saw in the Land of the Bushmen," *Critical Inquiry*, Vol. 12 (Autumn 1985), pp. 119-43.

14 *Ibid.*, p. 125.

15 *Ibid.*, p. 133.

could suggest."<sup>16</sup>

Not surprisingly, in view of its focus on the private sphere, most nineteenth-century women travel writers preferred the experiential mode. Fredrika Bremer goes even further. Early in *Hemmen i den Nya Varlden* she explicitly dissociates herself from the kind of perspective the informational mode represents. During a stay in the Hudson Valley, the narrator is taken by her hosts to the top of the highest hill in the area to get an overview of the landscape. Such overviews are a *locus classicus* in informational travel books and used as a way of charting the landscape. From his superior position the traveller takes possession of the country below. Mary Louise Pratt therefore labels this convention the "monarch-of-all-I-survey" scene.<sup>17</sup> However, Bremer's almost parodically unspectacular version of this scene constitutes a rejection of the power usually associated with the colonizing gaze:

vi strävade och hoppade över stock och sten i vår latta karriol, tills vi omkring niohundra fot i höjden och från toppen av det skogbevuxna berget såg ned på ungefär halva jorden, tyckte jag, men som slåg ut som ett böljande kaos av skogiga höjder och dalar, där människoboningarna skonjades blott som små ljusa flackar, knappast tydliga för blotta ögat. Sådana utsikter gör mig, som du vet, alltid betryckt. Manniskan, så stor i sitt lidande, i sin kamp, försvinner till intet, sedd från dessa materiella bergshojder; och därför tycker jag ej om dem. (Vol. IA, p. 47)

Against the authority of the impersonal map Bremer sets the moral and emotional authority of individual human experience. But there is a sense of unease here which suggests that something more is at stake than a choice between two different but equally valuable kinds of authority. The problem may be that only one kind is fully compatible with a respectable feminine persona. The authority of the panoramic overview is associated with a political and intellectual power that is culturally marked as masculine. Bremer's rhetorical devaluation of this perspective may therefore have been a way of avoiding the charge of unwomanly presumption.

The closest Fredrika Bremer comes to presenting a totalizing vision of the New World is a long retrospective letter to Per Boklin. It is one of only three letters out of forty-three that are addressed to men, and by far

16 Harriet Martineau, *Autobiography* (1877; rpt. London: Virago, 1983), Vol II, pp. 105-6.

17 Mary Louise Pratt, "Conventions of Representation: Where Discourse and Ideology Meet," in Heidi Byrne, ed., *Contemporary Perceptions of Language: Interdisciplinary Dimensions* (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 1982), p. 145.



the longest. Significantly, it is written in Cincinnati, a city she describes as "den nya världens medelpunkt" (Vol. IIB, p. 89), and dated in November 1850, almost exactly in the middle of her journey. For the benefit of her male friend and mentor she here provides her narrative with a symbolic central peak from which, like a secular Beatrice, she points out the many glories of the New World, not even confining her vision of it to an actual view. "Se först dess skådeplats!" she exclaims:

Du ser tvenne ofantliga dalgångar emellan tre stora bergskedjor, gående från snokalla nord-  
den till den glödande södern. Alleghany-bergen, Klippiga Bergen och Sierra Nevada eller  
Snobergs-kedjan — vilka senare fortsätter i Central-Amerika och i Syd-Amerika.  
Kordillererna och Anderna — öster och väster om dessa sluttar landet mot tvenne världshav.  
(Vol. IIB, p. 128)

From this enormous imaginary panorama, she goes on to describe the continent in detail, mapping the various features of the landscape as well as the cultural and climatic differences between regions. Then the people, their politics, their public institutions and the state of their arts, are surveyed and assessed from the same lofty, authoritative point of view. Toward the end of the letter the perspective even expands from this symbolic annexation of the American continent to include the entire globe: "vart ville jag ej resa," she says, "vad ville jag ej se av det som är av betydelse inom natur och folkliv på den vida jorden? Hela jorden ville jag gora till min. Varför er livet så kort?!" (p. 143). Only as an afterthought, in a postscript, does the unease of the first hilltop view resurface. Suddenly apologizing for the "breadth and length" of her letter, she compares it to a monster, "ett slags troll med många fötter, och en mängd ögon, blängande åt alla håll" (p. 150). The shocking image of hideous deformity suggests that the scope of the letter is somehow a violation of nature and, by extension, that the narrator by writing it has acted in an unnatural (unwomanly?) way.

In spite of its apologetic ending, however, Bremer's letter to Boklin is a good example of the nineteenth-century confidence in the authoritative, informational overview. In fact, there are four letters in *Hemmen i den Nya Världen* that may be classified as informational. The others are addressed to three well-known Danes, the scientist Hans Christian Ørsted, the theologian Hans Lassen Martensen and the Queen. That Bremer considered these four letters as a category of their own, is shown in one of her prefaces where she groups them together as "vilopunkter

under vager, från vilka tillryggalagda stadier overblickas och vag och mil besinnas" (Vol. IA, p. 15). The retrospective overviews are the only letters addressed to figures of public authority. The rest of the letters in the book, a total of thirty-nine, are obviously written with a predominantly feminine audience of private readers in mind. This audience is personified in the letters by the narrator's sister Agatha to whom almost all of them are addressed. Through concrete references to the content of Agatha's replies, her life in Sweden is made an integral part of the American journey. Ill and confined to the home, she is the textual representative of all the women who may share the narrator's interest in exploring the New World, but who for different reasons are restricted to vicarious participation. Within Bremer's text Fredrika, the traveller and narrator, and Agatha, the invalid reader, thus represent the opposite poles of nineteenth-century femininity. Agatha is limited to a domestic point of view. Fredrika, like Harriet Martineau, can choose to speak from other perspectives as well as that of the private sphere, and these changes are textually motivated by the establishment of separate audiences.

With the possible exception of the three letters addressed to Danish public figures, *Hemmen i den Nya Varlden* consists of what Bruce Redford calls "acts of intimacy."<sup>18</sup> Bremer's journal letters have a familiar, even intimate tone that is unusual in nineteenth-century travel writing. Nor is this merely a question of tone. Woven into the account of the New World are confessional passages in which the subject is the narrator's, not the country's, inner life. In these passages the journey becomes a symbol of self-realization. The westward movement is presented as a joyful unfolding, not only of the American landscape but of her own soul: "Sjalen utvidgar sig och liksom oppnar sig for den milda, fria vind, som susar fram over falten och liter de elektro-magnetiska trådarna, spanda darover melodiskt klinga vid dess forbifart," she notes in the letter to Boklin. "Det var en fest varje dag under min fard vasterut, då jag flot på ångans vingar over fälten fram emot den gyllene solen och tyckte mig flyga in i dess ljusvarld!" (Vol. IIB, p. 116). Although the last sentence may be read as an allusion to the myth of Icarus, Bremer leaves out its tragic aspect. There is no obvious danger involved in her

18 Bruce Redford, *The Converse of the Pen: Acts of Intimacy in the Eighteenth-Century Familiar Letter* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1986), p. 2.

narrator's flight toward the light of the sun. What she has in common with Icarus is the flight itself, in the double sense of flying and escape. The allusion suggests that the real (or psychological) goal of her journey is personal liberation. This project is never fully articulated in the text, but represented in the confessional passages through a series of images related to flying.

It first occurs in the letter written on the ship across the Atlantic. Here Bremer hints at that connection between travel and an adolescent desire to run away from the pressure of home and family that Sigmund Freud would later emphasize.<sup>19</sup> As a child she had escaped the closeness of the family by hiding in a little dark room, she says,

ty så fort jag var där helt allena i det djupa mörkret, erfor jag en underlig kansla, en kansla som om jag hade vingar och lyftes av dem, utan min tillskyndan—och det var mig en out-saglig njutning. Denne halvt andliga, halvt kroppsliga kansla kan jag ej förklara, men den återvänder alltid till mig då jag är alldeles ensam och i övrigt ostord av oroande tankar; och den är min hemliga, underliga glädje här, där jag står så ensam ibland framlingar, mitt i världshavet, och låter mig kanna mig fri och lätt som en fjävel på kvist. (Vol. IA, pp. 20-1)

In sharp contrast to the thematic focus on the values of family and domestic life, this passage celebrates a self-defining solitude that seems to be incompatible with the physical intimacy of other people. Similiar expressions of pleasurable loneliness are repeated over and over again during the American journey, but not before the narrator's westward flight "on the wings of steam." The letters describing her celebrity reception in New York and Boston convey a sense of suffocating entrapment. Her first solution is illness: attacks of fatigue and dyspepsia provide a form of escape not unlike her regressive withdrawal as a child to the "deep darkness" of the small room. Travel provides freedom in a more positive way, through "a living knowledge of life" that she has previously felt excluded from:

Vad jag under hela min ungdom hade önskat och långtat till; vad jag ansett mig vara mer än någon annan utestängd ifrån—en levande bekantskap med livets mångfaldiga gestalter, det hade nu kommit mig till del, blivit mitt i ett ovanligt mått. Vandrade jag inte nu för—fri såsom få är det—i den fria, stora, nya världen, fri att se och lära kanna allt vad jag ville? Var jag inte lätt och ledig, som en fågel? Min själ hade vingar och hela världen var min! (Vol.

19 Sigmund Freud, "A Disturbance of Memory on the Acropolis," *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, trans. James Strachey (London: The Hogarth Press, 1964), Vol. XXII, p. 247.

IB, p. 105)

As Nina Auerbach remarks, with reference to Charlotte Bronte's private expression of "a strong wish for wings," this is a glimpse of the "animating myth" of the spinster as hero.<sup>20</sup>

But as the title reminds us, *Hemmen i den Nya Varlden* is by no means intended as an escapist travel adventure. The subversive desires suggested by the sporadically recurring bird images are contradicted by the narrator's explicit statements. Both when she discusses the role of women in general and when she describes the specific purposes of her journey, she stresses the importance of moral and social responsibility. Thus Bremer's text gives contradictory signals about her motivation for going to America. To use Dennis Porter's words, her journey is conducted both "under the sign of duty" and "under the sign of flight."<sup>21</sup> But only the former is entirely respectable. Like most other nineteenth-century travellers her narrator is therefore careful to redefine her flight from home in terms of duty and improvement. In her many portraits of American women she indirectly justifies her own long absence from home by pointing to the necessity of extending the feminine sphere. The "true heroines" of her book are those women who use their maternal, nurturing qualities for the common good by taking on a public role. One example is a young teacher whom the narrator meets on a steam-ship going down the Mississippi on the way from Cincinnati to New Orleans:

Hon förstår Euklides och algebra lika väl som ndgon magister och battre an någon sådan förstår hon att leda en skola med ostyriga pojkar. "Oh, I love to rule little boys!" sade miss G. med ett leende, som i sin alsklighet hade en god del skalmsk men medveten maktkansla. Och med denna makt av godhet och skon kvinnlighet går hon lugnt att dtaga sig lärarinnans kall, men icke blott som lärarinna utan med kanslan av att vara en av mansklighetens unga modrar. Jag vet ingen vackrare bild. Sådana unga kvinnor ar våra dagars sanna roman-hjältinnor. (Vol. IIB, p. 164)

When Bremer tells her readers that this young woman "står fastare på sin grund an jordens alper och pyramider" (p. 163), she again, as in the first hilltop view, asserts the primacy of the feminine moral perspective.

20 Nina Auerbach, *Woman and the Demon: The Life of a Victorian Myth* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1982), p. 112.

21 Dennis Porter, "Reinventing Travel: Stendhal's Roman journey," *Genre*, Vol. 16 (Winter 1983), p. 468. To exemplify the two positions, Porter juxtaposes the paper by Freud mentioned above with the *Idler* essay where Samuel Johnson presents as an ideal the "useful traveller who brings home something by which his country may be benefited" (p. 467).

This episode also shows that Bremer's alternative to a totalizing overview is not only individual encounters, but a different way of appropriating the world, through an aesthetic focus on domestic details. In an almost Wordsworthian manner she compares the young teacher to a small and common clover, a flower, she says, that may easily be overlooked because the observer has to get very close in order to see its perfection and taste its sweetness. This preference for details is a feminine aesthetics, Naomi Schor argues, by virtue of "Western culture's longstanding association of the order of the small, the finely wrought, and the *heimlich* with the feminine sphere."<sup>22</sup> In *Hemmen i den Nya Varlden*; as we have seen, it coexists rather uneasily with other aesthetic positions that are more problematic from a feminine point of view. The panorama is rejected both because it blurs the details of the country and because it creates an intellectual and emotional distance between the observer and the observed. But as Bremer's four "resting places" show, it provides a useful (and conventional) way of charting a territory. A more radical challenge to the emphasis on sentimental closeness comes from the narrator's obvious delight in escaping from intimacy. In some of the confessional passages there is an urge toward what may be called an aesthetics of adventure. Her journey or, as she puts it, "mitt falttog ut i landet" (Vol. IA, p. 211), allows her to project a kind of heroic individualism previously reserved for men and directly opposed to the domestic ideal. By choosing to travel from home to home in the New World, however, she attempts to have it both ways.

22 Naomi Schor, *Reading in Detail: Aesthetics and the Feminine* (New York and London: Methuen, 1987), p. 97.